

# The **STANDARD BEARER**

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

...The sum and substance of this letter is: to pull down, to pluck up, and to destroy all wisdom and righteousness of the flesh..., no matter how heartily and sincerely they may be practised, and to implant, establish, and make large the reality of sin.... For God does not want to save us by our own but by an extraneous righteousness which does not originate in ourselves but comes to us from beyond ourselves, which does not arise on our earth but comes from heaven.

Martin Luther (from a lecture on Romans)

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## THE STANDARD BEARER

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## MEDITATION

# Righteous in Christ

Rev. H. Veldman

*"And to be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." Phil. 3:9*

To rejoice in the Lord, to win Christ, is for Paul the all-important, the overwhelming thing. Everything else is and must be considered worthless. Indeed, according to verses 5 and 6, the apostle could boast in the flesh. However, all these things he counts as no gain. To have all things and lack Christ, we have nothing. To have Christ and

lack all things, we possess all. O, the riches of him who has lost all but has won Christ.

And be found in Him. This thought is legal, judicial. To be found in Christ, or, literally, to be seen, observed in Christ means that God sees me, regards me in Christ, that I, before the tribunal of God, am



observed and regarded as in Christ Jesus. How wonderful is the assurance that God regards me in Christ, regards me not as my own but as legally in Him. And let us understand this thought in connection with the preceding. To win Christ implies everything, includes not only verse 9 but also verses 10 and 11. But, of all that follows in verses 9 - 11, our text is fundamental. If I be righteous in Christ, be found in Him, all the rest will follow. Then I will surely attain unto the resurrection from the dead, which, in this context, refers to that moment when the child of God shall forever put on heavenly immortality.

This is the truth of the Reformation, namely that we are found, are righteous in Christ, only for Jesus' sake, out of purely sovereign grace.

#### ITS IDEA

Righteous before God—what a magic, tremendous word! Our Heidelberg Catechism, in Question 59 of Lord's Day 23, points to it as the one cardinal benefit for the child of God. The Church of God has always emphasized, throughout the ages, the importance of our state, our legal relation to the law as determined by the Judge of all the earth. Modernism tells us that what we *do* is important, that what counts is our *action*. Important, however, is what we are, our state, our legal relation before God. What we do can never be the ground for our peace and righteousness. Of course, our faith must be accompanied by works; but our works are the fruit of faith, inasmuch as faith is a *living* bond. Besides, how can our works ever render us righteous before God? Are not our best works as filthy rags (Is. 64:6)? Indeed, the important question is: what is my state, my legal position before the judgment seat of God? Am I judged guilty or innocent? Thirdly, the apostle in this context considers all things but dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. He will gladly give up all things, the things, mind you, that had meant everything to him—see verses 4 through 6. And, finally, here we have the very heart and core of the Reformation, as far as Martin Luther was concerned. How he had striven to make himself righteous before! But, it was all in vain. Peace came into his soul only when he experienced the truth of the Word of God, that we are just by faith, are righteous only for Jesus' sake, out of purely sovereign grace.

Righteous before God—what does this mean?

The idea is legal. It must not be confused with sanctification, a work of God's grace by His Spirit within us, delivering us from the stain and pollution of sin. This righteousness implies that we stand in judgment before the living God. Of course, we are always in judgment before the Lord. The Lord

never delays or postpones His judgment upon the children of men. He is always punishing the wicked, is never gracious unto them. God alone is Judge. He alone can judge. He alone reads and knows the hearts of men. To be righteous before God means that God declares, upon the basis of His eternal and unchangeable and perfect justice, that we are free from all guilt and debt, that in nothing the law can condemn us, and that we are heirs of eternal life and therefore have a right to everlasting life and glory in God's heavenly and everlasting tabernacle.

And what a tremendous truth, benefit this is! It implies an everlasting exemption from divine punishment, and, positively, that we are heirs of, entitled to everlasting life! Tremendous, secondly, is this wonderful truth because of you and me who are declared righteous. Are we not by nature sinners, conceived in sin and daily increasing all our sin and guilt, piling up our debt before the living God? Is it not amazing to be declared righteous before God? And tremendous, thirdly, because of God Who justifies us! God, we read in Scripture, is not a man. He does not lie; His judgment is therefore always true. And He does not change. His judgment is therefore always irrevocable. What an unspeakably glorious righteousness this is! Of it this text speaks. No wonder that the apostle speaks of the *excellency* of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord! No wonder that he would consider all things but loss that he may win Christ and be found in Him! Indeed, to be found in Christ, to be righteous in Him before God means that we are righteous forevermore!

#### ITS SOURCE

Notice the contrast as expressed in this text: "not having mine own righteousness which is of the law."

No, the apostle does not mean that our righteousness before God ignores the law and that it is therefore arbitrary. God in Christ surely did not ignore His law but He fulfilled it. The apostle, however, refers to *mine own* righteousness, to which I would attain by my fulfilling of God's law.

How man loves to secure his own righteousness! How the Jew prided himself in the fact that he so carefully, painstakingly fulfilled the law, not only fulfilling the law but even exceeding its requirements—see verses 4 - 6. Instead of fasting only once a year he would fast twice a week.

And how the Jew of Paul's day zealously defended his position! How they opposed the apostle because he would speak of a righteousness of God and by faith! They attacked him in his claim to be an apostle; they followed him from city to city; they took hold of him, beat him with stones, left him as



one dead. They would cling tenaciously to their endeavor to obtain divine approval and sanction in the way of their own works.

And this is repeated countless times throughout the ages. This was the issue of the Reformation. The Church did not oppose Luther because he would destroy that church. Luther was truly a reformer. They opposed him because he renounced a salvation and justification by works. They anathematized anyone who denied the meritorious value of good works. And this is the issue throughout the ages. Man always loves to take pride in himself.

However, Paul counts all things but loss in order that he may possess, not the righteousness through his works of the law, but only through faith in Christ. How utterly worthless are *our* works of the law! They do not bring us one step nearer to God; they never render us righteous before God. How could I ever become righteous before God out of the law? I cannot pay the penalty. I cannot make amends. Indeed, the source of my justification is never in me. All I can do is increase my guilt before the Lord. I can only work my way into greater condemnation.

Indeed, this righteousness is a righteousness of God. It is obvious what this expression means in this text. It is contrasted here with the expression, "mine own righteousness." My own righteousness is the righteousness to which *I* attain, which I acquire and merit. Hence, the righteousness of God means my justification which is of God.

This is God's righteousness. It is His, first of all, because He conceived of it. He willed it eternally, from before the foundations of the world. He conceived eternally of the relationship between Christ and His own, that He is the Head and therefore responsible for the body, the elect given Him of the Father, that our sin and guilt should be upon Him and blotted out by His perfect righteousness upon the cross of Calvary. Besides, it is God's righteousness also because He alone realizes it, through Christ Jesus, our Lord, centrally upon the cross and spiritually by His grace and Spirit in our hearts. And presently He will manifest this righteousness in that wondrous day when Christ will return upon the clouds of heaven. Then it will be revealed that we are clothed with the perfect righteousness of Christ, and all this only because He loved us, always first, in Jesus Christ, my Lord.

#### ITS BESTOWAL

We read of this righteousness that it is the righteousness which is through the faith of Christ. Christ is the object of this faith. Christ is our Lord Jesus Christ as the anointed Servant of Jehovah, Who did what we could never do, our only Hope.

And the faith of Christ is this faith as it is the spiritual bond uniting us with Christ; through faith we are one with Him, live out of Him, receive our all from Him Who suffered and died and is risen from the dead.

This righteousness, we read, is through the faith of Christ. Here the apostle directs us to how this righteousness is given unto us. All our righteousness is in Christ Jesus. This righteousness, now, actually becomes ours through faith, God's gift to His own, the bond uniting us with Christ Jesus. Based upon the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross of Calvary, we are united with Him, live out of Him, so that we are now actually righteous before God, now in principle and presently in perfection; God sees us as we are now in Christ Jesus, beholds no iniquity in us and no perverseness.

And the apostle concludes with the words: "the righteousness which is of God by faith." Literally we read: "the righteousness which is of God upon faith." In these words the apostle declares how I receive and experience this righteousness, receive it in my consciousness. No, the apostle does not mean that we in any way merit it, that it, therefore, rests upon faith. Fact is, it is God's righteousness and therefore we are never righteous because of our faith. Upon my faith. This is how I receive and experience it. To believe in Jesus—how humiliating! It means that I am hopelessly and helplessly lost in sin, that I can never save myself, that all my salvation is possible only through the crucified Lamb of God and of Calvary. Righteousness is exclusively the gift of God and it is only as such that I can receive and experience it.

I am nothing.

Christ has become my all.

Always through faith I approach God through Jesus Christ, my Lord.

Unto the praise of God, the God of my salvation.

***The Standard Bearer  
makes an excellent  
gift for the  
sick and shut-in.***



## EDITORIAL

# The GKN on the Nature of the Authority of Scripture

*Prof. H. C. Hoeksema*

Last time we saw that the Report/Decision of the Gereformeerde Kerken reached the point in its argumentation at which it stated that while the human element and the divine element in Scripture cannot be separated in such a way that ultimately the so-called "authentic" revelation is retained, nevertheless it is possible "to a certain extent" to make this distinction. After all, the Word of God is present, according to the Report, even where "the human time-bound shines through." Naturally, this necessitates distinguishing between the two. When you take the position that Scripture is, as to its contents, the Word of God—period, then it is not necessary to distinguish between the two. This is obvious: one is dealing only with the Word of God. But when you take the position that Scripture is in one way or another a mixture—Word of God and words of men—then no matter how you describe the mixture, no matter in what fashion and to how thorough an extent the human and divine elements are mixed, somehow or other that mixture must be unscrambled. Somehow the Word of God has to be distilled out of those Scriptures. The distinction which the Report wants to make "to a certain extent" necessitates this. And thus it becomes the task of exegesis, according to the Report, "to search out what God wanted to reveal as His Word through these human words." Poor God! He was unable to express Himself clearly through human words, so that men have to search out what He "wanted to say." Not only so, but truth is relational, so that it does not always mean the same thing in different times and circumstances. Depending on the time and circumstances of the expositor, there may be deep or less deep or deeper understandings of the text. It all depends....

Let me remind the reader that my earlier quotations of what the Report has to say about the historical trustworthiness of Scripture furnish a clear example of precisely where this sort of thinking leads. On the basis offered by the Report one can make Scripture say almost anything he wants it to say, and he can destroy completely the historical accuracy and trustworthiness of Scripture.

But let us return to the thread of the Report's

argument.

At this point in Chapter IV the Report is ready to make a fatal thrust at the Reformed position concerning the nature of the Scriptures and their authority. It does so, first of all, by accusing the "Reformed tradition" of holding to mechanical inspiration, as follows:

As is described in Chapter III, in the Reformed tradition the teaching of the infallibility of the Holy Scripture has been defended for a long time in a sense of an absolute inerrancy. One then proceeded from the so-called mechanical inspiration by which one understood that the Holy Spirit literally dictated the Scriptures to the writers of the Bible. Sometimes the reasoning was so strict and direct that it was held that even the vowel marks of the Hebrew text were inspired. Apparently they did not yet know that these vowel marks were added to the text of the Old Testament in the Middle Ages.

Now it is indeed questionable whether anyone ever held the position concerning the vowel marks of the Hebrew text which the Report here imputes to some. But it is certain, apart from this, that this does not represent the "Reformed tradition," that is, the main line of Reformed theology concerning Scripture. In the second place, it is not true that the "Reformed tradition" held to mechanical inspiration. It is in my opinion doubtful, in fact, whether any theologian of note ever held to a purely mechanical view of inspiration, a mere dictation-theory. This would mean that just as I might dictate this editorial to my secretary, or put it on my Dictaphone cassette, and have her type it, so God dictated His Word to the human writers of Holy Scripture. The "Reformed tradition" did not hold this; they held to organic inspiration, even before the term "organic" was used. In the third place, there are certainly instances in which the holy men who wrote Scripture were instructed by God directly to write what they wrote, as well as the instance which our Confession cites in which God Himself "wrote with His own finger the two tables of the law." Call this mechanical, if you will; but so be it. In the fourth place, IF I had to choose—and I do not; but IF— between so-called mechanical



inspiration, which after all retains the absolute infallibility of the Scriptures and verbal inspiration, and the nameless view of the Report, which loses the Scriptures and makes their meaning subject to the every whim and fancy of professional theologians, then I would certainly choose mechanical inspiration. But such a choice is not necessary whatsoever. There is still the thoroughly Reformed view of organic inspiration.

Let me insert a note here concerning organic inspiration. We must remember that organic inspiration does not merely mean that the Holy Spirit *found* and *used* holy men who were suitable to be used as the instruments of inspiration. It does not even mean only that the Holy Spirit *prepared* them—though it does indeed include this. But it means first that God Himself *ordained*, and that, too ordained from eternity in His counsel, the various holy men with their character, talents, bent of nature, circumstances, time in history, etc., to be the instruments of revelation and inspiration. And even as He ordained them, so He realized them and prepared them in time, and so He caused the Scriptures to be written by them. This is neither the time nor the place for a lengthy exposition of the concept of organic inspiration. But we must keep the above in mind. I am inclined to think that frequently this aspect of organic inspiration is lost from view. In fact, I sometimes think that behind all the discussion and all the problems connected with this subject of the inspiration and authority of Scripture is the deeper issue of the absolute sovereignty and the sovereign decrees of the Lord our God. I maintain that it is simply impossible to have a proper conception of revelation and inspiration if one does not want to operate with the principle of God's sovereignty and His sovereign decree as a working principle.

But after those parenthetical remarks, let us return to the Report.

The next step is that the Report strikes directly at the Belgic Confession. True, it tempers, or tries to temper, the criticism somewhat. But it is plain that the Report disagrees, and disagrees fundamentally, with Article III of the Confession. The Synod of the GKN should be consistent and revise the article.

Here is what Article III says:

We confess that this Word of God was not sent, nor delivered by the will of man, but that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, as the apostle Peter saith. And that afterwards God, from a special care, which He has for us and our salvation, commanded His servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit His revealed word to writing; and He Himself wrote with His own finger, the two tables of the law. Therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures.

Notice how this article breathes a deep respect for and appreciation of the Scriptures. How different from the language of the Report!

Here is what the Report says about Article III:

Fortunately the Belgic Confession does not go that far in Article III; an historically correct exposition of this Article must however lead to the conclusion that the divine origin of the entire Scripture was here confessed by the Fathers and that in such a way that all the words of the Scripture were equally unquestionably and literally the Words of God, as if God had written them down with His own finger. According to the classic Reformed conception, the human writer of the Bible was really nothing more than a passive instrument of the Spirit, a quill in the hand of God.

But there is nothing in the article which makes those human writers nothing more than a passive instrument, a "quill in the hand of God."

The Report continues:

The recent investigation of the Bible, as that is described in Chapter II, has taught us that God did not desire that the Bible writers would eliminate themselves to the extent assumed by the early orthodoxy in its time. However conscientious and obedient these writers were as they followed the Holy Spirit, they enjoyed a certain freedom just because God had taken them thus into His service. It appears that God usually performs his work on earth in covenant fellowship with chosen people. The Bible continually witnesses to this. Possibly we would formulate Article III of the Belgic Confession somewhat differently today than was the case at the time. But this is not strictly necessary. The text of the Article itself provides sufficient room for an interpretation in the sense which we have here proposed because it makes a distinction between the work of the Holy Spirit in the proclamation of the Word of God and the inscripturation of the Holy Scriptures.

How thankful we may be that the Synod of the GKN does not have the opportunity to formulate Article III today! It would indeed be somewhat different!

And as for the claim that the Article itself leaves room for the view of this Report, that is pure fiction! The GKN has abandoned its own confession, and that, too, by official decree!

*Take time to  
read and study  
The Standard Bearer*



## THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

# The Bible Conference in Birmingham

*Prof. Robert D. Decker*

Now that we have completed our discussion of the missionary preaching of the Apostles we are going to interrupt the series on Missionary Methods in order to report on a Bible Conference in which the undersigned participated. The Conference which took place in May was hosted by Rev. Ronald Van Overloop and our home mission station in Birmingham, Alabama. In addition to Pastor Van Overloop and myself, Rev. Steven Houck participated. It was a four-day conference and began on Sunday. Two worship services were held on Sunday. Pastor Houck preached on Sunday morning and Pastor Van Overloop preached on Sunday evening. I preached on Monday evening and again on Tuesday evening. The theme which we developed in the preaching was, "The Christian Marriage." After the Monday and Tuesday meetings there was opportunity for the audience to ask questions and participate in a bit of discussion. On the basis of God's promise we believe the preaching bore fruit. Certainly it was a blessing to fellowship with the small band of saints in Birmingham as well as with colleagues in the ministry. The daytime hours were not wasted. Certainly not! In the comfortable study of the Van Overloop home the three of us discussed some of the questions and problems which our home missionaries are facing in their work. Some of these problems make their work painstakingly difficult and even frustrating at times. We are writing this report because we thought our readers might like to know about some of these matters. I might add that we were joined one morning by Rev. Carl Russell, who pastors an independent Presbyterian Church in Birmingham. Pastor Russell, a native of Birmingham, is a graduate of Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. Speaking out of his "deep south" religious and cultural heritage Pastor Russell contributed helpful advice, especially concerning our work in Birmingham.

One of the observations made (and this recurred throughout our discussions) was that a significant change has occurred in Protestant Reformed mission work. Part of that significant change is the fact that our churches did no foreign work until they became involved in Singapore just a few years ago. Another part of the change is that, for the first

fifty years or so of our history, our churches were not really involved in home mission work. The churches considered it their first responsibility (and correctly so) to do church reformation work. The churches worked with people who were dissatisfied in the Christian Reformed Church. Ministers (H. Hoeksema and G.M. Ophoff initially) and later a home missionary would lecture and preach and discuss matters pertaining to the faith with small groups of people who had called for help. These groups often became the nuclei of many of our churches, particularly in the West. These people for the most part were familiar with the Three Forms of Unity, with Reformed Church Polity and Liturgy. They knew the language of the Reformed Faith and they knew their Bibles. Their walk of life was almost identical with that of our people. These people usually agreed with the position of our churches on various issues such as: divorce and remarriage, unionism, dancing, drama, etc. The point is that our churches worked with people who were very much like us. They were hardworking, pious, Reformed Dutchmen. In Colorado and the Dakotas they were the same, except they were Germans. Now that has all changed. Now the churches work with Chinese in Singapore, and with others in East Lansing, Michigan and Birmingham, Alabama. Our missionaries meet people constantly who have never heard of the Reformed Faith or the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. These people have no knowledge of the Reformed Creeds. If they do, their knowledge is limited. This is true not only of those outside of the Church but also of those within the Church. Along with all of the apostasy in the Church of our day is the failure of the pulpit to preach the Word. That must be the case, for if the Word of God is no longer believed it cannot be preached. Thus the people of God are gradually starving to death spiritually. The lament of the prophet is applicable to our day: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..." (Hosea 4:6).

This factor has very serious implications for home mission work. The missionary really can assume nothing. He must not preach as he would in the home church. If the missionary were to do that, his hearers would not understand what he was saying. Terminology, that is, doctrinal terminology,



familiar to one who has been born and raised and catechized in a Protestant Reformed Church and educated in a Protestant Reformed School is like a foreign language on the home mission field. This does not mean the message must be changed. It certainly does not mean that the truth of the gospel must be compromised. What is preached in the home church and what is preached on the mission field must be the same precious truth of Holy Scripture. But that truth must be carefully and patiently explained, in language the people can understand. The missionary must be at pains to explain and define the terms he uses in his preaching and teaching. Still more, he must speak and preach in such a manner as to make perfectly clear that what he is preaching is taught by Scripture. This also applies to our radio work. The radio preacher cannot simply condense one of his Sunday sermons for broadcasting. Ninety percent or more of the listeners would not understand what he was saying. Here again the message must be simple and clear. Above all else it must be an exposition of the Word of God. It must be plain to the listener that this message is in complete harmony with what the Bible says.

In this same connection we discussed the content or the nature of the content of the preaching on the mission field. The content of course is Scripture. It is also true that our Protestant Reformed missionaries preach distinctively Protestant Reformed sermons. But the question is: what subjects should be preached? In the past (and this was in the very nature of the case) our missionaries engaged in a good bit of polemics and controversy on the home fields. This happened naturally because our missionaries and churches were concerned to show our brothers and sisters in the Christian Reformed and other Reformed Churches the error of Common Grace and other departures from the Reformed truth. In the light of the doctrinal apathy and apostasy of our day it was our consensus that polemics should be avoided at least initially. Rather than to speak out on the law and gospel controversy, for example, in which many of the southern churches are engaged, it is better just to preach the gospel. Later, when the hearers become more mature spiritually, these matters can be more profitably considered.

Almost immediately upon arriving at the parsonage in Birmingham early Saturday afternoon, we began discussing goals. What is or what ought to be the goals of our home mission work? What ends are we trying to reach? What does Scripture have to say to this point? With these questions we were busy that warm, sunny, spring afternoon. The immediate goal, as is plain from Scripture, especially the record in Acts, must be the gathering of the

elect by means of the preaching of the gospel. It makes no difference from where these come: out of apostatizing Reformed or Presbyterian Churches, Arminian churches, or no churches at all (unconverted). These must be gathered with a view to the organization of a Protestant Reformed congregation. The newly-established church can then continue to evangelize in its locale while the missionary is freed to begin work in another area. The second goal (and, remember, these two cannot be separated) is to leave a witness to the truth of the Word of God. The Word of the Gospel must be proclaimed, together with the command to repent and believe, throughout the area with a view to the coming of the Kingdom of Christ. The Word never returns void. It is a savor of life unto life, but also of death unto death. Especially with regard to this latter goal, growth in numbers is not necessary. In fact, we agreed, it is possible to see no growth at all for a time and still meet the goals. That these ends may be reached is the prayer of the missionary and the church which sends him.

Another related question and one which is extremely difficult to answer is: when may the missionary leave an area? This is not a problem when there is ample positive fruit upon the missionary's preaching and teaching. When a congregation is organized the missionary's work is finished and he must go elsewhere. But when there is little positive fruit and the missionary is working with only a very few families, the question of when to terminate the work becomes difficult. We all agreed that certainly a missionary ought not leave an area before a rather high percentage of the population had been reached in one way or another. This can be done by publicizing the worship services, conducting well-publicized Bible classes or lectures or midweek preaching services. Another method is to divide the area into sections and then mail tracts or pamphlets to each address, section by section. These tracts would contain information about our churches and the services and missionary pastor. This method was dubbed, "blitz." Whatever the method, it was felt that the missionary could not in good conscience end his work in a given locale without making every effort to reach as many as possible and thus leaving a witness. To put this in terms of months or years is impossible. Much depends upon the area itself and the particular circumstances the missionary might encounter.

More was discussed, but these were the main topics of concern. The undersigned left the conference with more insight into the problems and difficulties of the work. He also left with a deeper appreciation for our missionaries, and for their wives and children. All labor and live at personal sacri-



fice. Let us be diligent in prayer for them. May God prosper their work and make it fruitful unto the

gathering of His Church and the coming of His Kingdom in Jesus Christ.

## THE STRENGTH OF YOUTH

### Seeking a Wife

*Rev. Rodney Miersma*

A young man seeks a young woman that they may cleave to each other as one flesh. Over and over this is repeated, among all nations and tribes, from the beginning of time until the return of Christ. This is natural, of course, for God created this desire within both the man and the woman. Not only is this natural but it is also good, for "whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord."

This brings one before the very important question: where does one look if he is to find a wife? The Word of God is the rule for our life, including the seeking of a wife. It gives us positive direction as to what to look for and as to where to look. In addition, it warns us concerning what not to look for and where not to look. God gives His church good instruction in this area by revealing to us the history of the world just prior to the flood. Bible history is not simply the record of facts but the record of God's unfolding plan as He realizes His covenant with His people in Jesus Christ. Bible history then serves unto our instruction that we may know what the will of God is for us.

The history immediately before the flood to which I draw your attention is that which is found in the first part of Genesis 6. This is the account of the sons of God who saw that the daughters of men were fair and took them wives of all which they chose. This means that the sons of the church, of the seed of the woman, of the line of the covenant in the generations of Seth, looked upon and took upon themselves the daughters of the world, of the seed of the serpent, of the reprobate children in the generations of Cain. This was not pleasing unto the Lord. It was one of the reasons why wickedness in the earth was so great.

What lesson do we see here and what can we learn? We see that it is not the will of God that we amalgamate with the wicked who know not the Lord. Our calling is always to be separate for we must be holy even as the Lord our God is holy. We must live in the world but spiritually be not of the world.

This is especially true in the sphere of marriage which is, after all, the goal of the young man as he seeks a young woman. Marriage stands at the very core of life. If two people are to be united so closely that they are considered before God as one, then it is essential that all aspects of their life be one. There must be unity of faith and unity of purpose as they together confess the one and the same Lord. Two people now share their life, their nature, and their love.

Now if there is not unity of faith and if the same Lord is not confessed, then there is an unequal yoke against which the Lord warns. All too often that is what is happening today. Young men and young women do not seek a life's partner from the household of faith but go to the synagogue of Satan. This is to our shame, and if this trend continues unchecked then it will lead to the downfall of the church in which God has given us a name and a place, for He will cut us off in our generations.

Today it is very easy for the young man to be attracted by the woman who stands outside of the line of the covenant. As in the days of Noah so also today the woman stands in the forefront. She is held up before all men so that all may look upon her with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. She is the sex symbol that stimulates one to buy all kinds of products from cosmetics to liquor to cars. You name it; sex sells it. The women's liberation movement has placed woman on a pedestal so that she no longer knows her rightful place.

Young men, you are being tempted. Your flesh cries out for this woman because she is pleasing to your flesh. She represents all the so-called good things in life. But remember the lesson in Genesis 6. The woman in the forefront went hand in hand with all the pleasures and treasures of the world. The devil, Satan, knows how to operate. The inventions of Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-cain were used in the service of sin. By their outward greatness and glitter the sons of God were attracted so that they turned their eyes away from the city that hath foun-



dations. The outward form, beauty, and sensuousness of all the inventions that made life so pleasant corresponded to the sensuous beauty and outward form of the woman as represented in Adah and Zillah, wives of Lamech, and in Naamah, Lamech's daughter.

This is the tool of Satan today also. To get at the very core of a man's life he uses that which is nearest to his heart, the woman. This is very subtle. But be not deceived, for the love that Satan proposes is not true love. True love is the bond of perfectness. You are familiar with the instructions that accompany various kinds of glue. Both surfaces must be clean in order for them to adhere to each other. The two surfaces must be compatible to each other. A man and woman must also be compatible. However, the basis for this compatibility certainly is more than outward beauty. The beauty and the compatibility must be spiritual in addition to the physical and psychical compatibility. In other words, the love of a man for a woman and vice versa must be a holy love as wrought in the heart by the Spirit of Christ. Then there can be a true bond that shall not come apart at the first sign of stress.

To find such a wife one does not seek among the daughters of men. Many have been the excuses, all covered with the sugar of false piety. How often have you not heard one justify dating among the daughters of men because in this way one can be gained unto Christ? Or one hears the argument that we must witness. And in order to witness effectively we must join ourselves to the world in marriage.

Dear Christian, covenant youth, by joining yourselves with the world you do not gain the world for Christ, but you in turn are swallowed up. That is the lesson gained here in this account of the amalgamation of the sons of God and the daughters of men. You see, we do not convert anyone. God only can do that. When we ally ourselves with the world we put on an unequal yoke. That does not make the team plow better, but makes it impossible. The world does not become better by our joining it; rather it makes us more corrupt.

We may talk all we want about witnessing by joining the world, but if we are honest with ourselves, then we must admit that it is not our desire to witness but our lust of the flesh that attracts us to the daughters of men. The Lord warns us through this history that we are playing with fire when we fan our flaming passions with the fannies of the daughters of men. The danger is not in that those in the world come to the church to seek out God-fearing youth who in turn are led into the world. No, the sons of God go forth seeking the daughters of men. The danger begins within our own hearts

as we look about us with lust in our eyes. The world does not come seeking the church, but we seek the world.

The will of God for His covenant youth is that they seek within the sphere of the church. As God's children you must set your sights on Christian virtues. This must be the beginning point. One does not first look for that which pleases the flesh, with the false idea that love and marriage will change all the bad into good. If you think that that will happen, then you are sadly mistaken. When the wedding is over you must not be surprised if your spouse will not come to church with you. Then, for the sake of outward peace you either go with your husband or wife to his or her church or compromise by going to an entirely different church. In each case, the truth and your spiritual life suffer.

But perhaps your spouse does come to church with you. Often this is only outward unity when that which is most important, the unity of faith, is still missing. Your marriage suffers, your children suffer, and the marriage is headed for divorce. You reply that this will never happen to you for you are strong. If you were so strong you would not be looking among the daughters of men in the first place. To the extent that you believe you are strong you are really weak. You are then as the drunkard who because of his intoxication thinks he can conquer the world, but when he gets up to walk falls flat on his face.

We are strong in the way of obedience. As we obey God's commands to be separate and not to amalgamate with the world He blesses us so that we grow in strength. But if we walk contrary to His will, revealing our weakness by our disobedience, then we are not blessed either. Thus, the weak become weaker still.

Your calling, then, young people, as you seek a helpmeet, is to live antithetically. Amalgamation blurs the line of demarcation until one does not see any difference or any distinction between the church and the world. As this happens the history of this present age becomes more and more like the days before the flood—days that are characterized by godlessness and wickedness, which, in turn, were and are being fueled by amalgamation.

Against this wickedness you must fight. You must open your eyes and watch. Do not look upon the world with lovesick eyes which are blind to reality. But in all things, especially as you seek to establish a home through marriage, seek ye first the kingdom of heaven. That is the way of blessing; that is the way of blessed peace and comfort as you live a life of sanctification before and after your wedding day. Pray unto the Lord and seek His grace as He imparts that grace through the preach-



ing of the Word and the sacraments. Then a covenant home will be established and you shall see your children's children gathered about you as

you stand in the shadow of the cross of Calvary. The things of the world shall pass away, but that which is of God shall endure forever.

## THE DAY OF SHADOWS

### A Necessary Distress

*Rev. John A. Heys*

When the ten brothers who had sold Joseph into Egypt as a slave stood before him, not aware of his identity, and he accused them of being spies who came to see the nakedness of the land, he was not bearing false witness against them. He knew better. He knew exactly who they were and why they came to Egypt. To speak the truth ourselves we cannot say that it was a case of saying the wrong thing because of ignorance. And yet we may not accuse Joseph of breaking the ninth commandment. Nor may we accuse him of cruelty and injustice when he cast them all into prison for three days.

What shall we then say about this charge of Joseph? We shall say first of all that although they were not spies who came to see the nakedness of the land, there was an element of truth in calling them spies. For spies are men who hide the truth, men who come under false pretenses, make themselves out for what they are not, and behind your back, or covering up before your eyes, desire your hurt and ruin. And in that light the ten brothers rather than Joseph should be accused of breaking the ninth commandment. For with bold faces, because they did not recognize him, they declare that they were true men. In this they were bearing false witness against Joseph. They were dishing out an untruth, pretending to be what they were not, hiding the truth; and although they were not in it seeking positively to injure and ruin Joseph, they were refusing to make any restoration and deliverance from the misery into which they sold him.

We may note in Genesis 42:14 that, as far as Joseph is concerned, this is the very heart of the matter. He says to them, "That is it that I spake unto you saying, ye are spies." And this follows immediately after the statement of the brothers that their youngest brother is back in Canaan with their father, and the twelfth brother *is not*. Were they true men they would have said, "We know not where the twelfth brother is, for we sold him as a slave into Egypt some ten years ago, and we have

lost track of him. Sir, would you kindly use your influence to help us trace him so we can confess our sin to him and seek to set him free?" No wonder is it that, after they said that he was not, that is, was dead, Joseph said, "That is it that I spake unto you saying, Ye are spies." They were covering up, which is characteristic of spies.

Let it also be noted that, when Joseph accuses them of coming to see the nakedness of the land, he was not bearing false witness *against* them but *for* them. The accusation was not true, and Joseph knew that it was not true, for he had already recognized them as his brothers. It was not, however, an accusation hurled at them in hatred, to hurt them, to get a material advantage over them, to take away any of their possessions, or even to bring upon them a punishment that they did not deserve. It was a false accusation that was spoken *for* their good in an attempt to bring them to repentance and confession of their sin.

In that light it can also be seen that it was not cruel or unjust to have them cast into prison for three days. And do not argue that Egypt's judicial department had no right to punish Canaanites for a crime which they committed upon a Canaanite in Canaan. This was not the work of Egypt's judicial department but of Joseph. He used the facilities of Egypt which were at his disposal, but he was neither functioning here as an Egyptian judge, nor as an Egyptian policeman. What is more, this is not punishment for a crime, but chastisement which God sent upon these brothers to correct and restore them. And may not He Who is the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, Whose is not only Egypt but the whole universe, use part of it to chastize His people?

In His mercy God gave these ten brothers three days to talk things over and give some real deep and serious thought to the matter that had been bothering their consciences all these years. And let it be asked in parentheses, what are three days in prison



compared with the life of slavery to which they had consigned Joseph? Have they any room to complain about the fact that he planned to have them in prison for three days? In love and for their good Joseph planned three days for contemplation, soul searching, and beseeching of God on their knees for deliverance and an explanation of this turn of events in their lives. And by the work of the irresistible Holy Spirit they were brought to repentance and confession so that three days later before Joseph they declare—not knowing that he hearing them understood their language—"We verily are guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us." And Reuben added, "Spake I not unto you saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold, also his blood is required."

This they confessed after Joseph had brought them up out of prison, and had informed them that he feared God, that he would keep one of them in prison as an hostage, and that, to prove themselves to be true men, they would have to bring along their youngest brother, after which they would receive the one in prison back again. "So shall your words be verified," Joseph said, "and ye shall not die" (Genesis 42:18-21). To this the brothers agreed, and that is the meaning of the words, "And they did so." Joseph had said to them, "This do and live, for I fear God." And when we read that they did so, it means that they agreed to this arrangement.

The question may be asked, "Why did he not demand that they bring their father along, seeing that he was as eager to see him as to see his younger brother?" And the answer must be found in Joseph's purpose with the whole verification of their words. Remember that he needed no proof of the fact that they were telling the truth when they said that they were all sons of one father and had a young brother home. The only added information that they could give was that both their father and their brother were still alive. But behind all this rough speech, imprisonment, keeping one of the brothers in prison, and demanding that Benjamin be brought down to Egypt that their words might be verified is the fact that these brothers had not simply sinned against Joseph. They had cruelly, shamefully and unnecessarily cast their father into deep grief and sorrow. Now Joseph had no way of knowing that they had dipped his coat in the blood of a kid and made their father believe that a wild beast had slain him. He could only surmise how much and what they told their father about selling him into Egypt as a slave. He did not know that Jacob refused to be comforted and told his sons that he would go to his

grave mourning for this most beloved son. But he certainly knew that these ten brothers had robbed their father of his fellowship, and that to him Joseph was as good as dead. He could realize very keenly by the loss of his father's fellowship what his father felt in regard to himself. And true men do not do a thing like that to their father.

By demanding that they bring Benjamin along and down to Egypt he could determine whether these brothers now had any feeling and love for their father. Would they quickly agree to his proposition to save their own lives? Or would they hesitate and be reluctant to rob their father of two more sons—Simeon left behind in prison, and Benjamin taken from him with the fear of losing him? Consider once: how could Jacob be sure that this harsh man in Egypt would not put all of them back in prison including Benjamin? He had appeared to be a rough speaker and one quick to imprison. Would he be satisfied that this was their younger brother? And would he next insist that they give proof that this other, twelfth brother was not? Would they be required to give proof of his death, and be able to do that? And the reaction of the brothers to this proposition of Joseph would reveal whether they would want to spare their father more robbing of sons and grief, even if it be a temporary robbing. Even that would hurt this aged father who had now replaced Joseph with Benjamin as his most beloved son.

As we saw, they did agree quite readily and quickly to the proposition. There must have been a brief conference among them; but we are given to believe that there was no hesitation, and the nodding of the heads in agreement, when their spokesman revealed their willingness, revealed no love or feeling for their father. (Did they really have a choice? Joseph had said, Do this and live." Had they not agreed it would have meant death for all of them; and that surely would have been a blow to their father.) But the Scriptures give us more information. In their brief conference while they debated the issue they took Joseph, we may believe, by surprise. For in their discussion of the proposition—not knowing that Joseph understood them—they confessed their sin against him and that God was sending them this distress. *This* moved Joseph to tears, because of which he had to turn away from them. They were tears of spiritual joy.

But even though they confessed all this, they had not yet shown any repentance as far as what they did to their father is concerned. In fact, when they get home they revert to their bearing of false witness against their father when they relate what happened in Egypt. Once again they prolong the grief of Jacob with the lie that Joseph "is not." And let it never be forgotten that one can bear false witness



against another by one's silence. When you can relieve one's fears and save one from a punishment that one does not deserve by speaking up and defending that one, and you remain silent, you are breaking the ninth commandment. And though in Joseph's hearing, though not as addressed to him, they admitted guilt in their sale of him as a slave, as long as they do not tell their father the truth, they are not true men, and are hurting him.

Joseph, seeing the beginning of a change in his brothers, does weep. Yet he also presses on with the attempt to get them to confess all. They are still covering up and thus acting as spies. This is not the time for him to reveal his identity. It may hurt a parent to have to punish his child; but this must not move him to terminate the means of correcting. Through Solomon God Himself teaches us that "He that spareth the rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Proverbs 13:24). All too quickly parents will spare the rod because it is not convenient for their own flesh. All too quickly, because of the shame of it, parents will seek to deliver their children from civil punishment for their crimes. All too quickly they will go to defend their erring child against its teacher in school, and build up more disrespect for the teacher in the

child's mind. All too quickly will churches fail to discipline those who walk in sin because it might cause the church to lose members and financial support. Better it is to emulate Joseph. Go and weep in secret in your closet, for it is no pleasure to cut off from the Church of God. But be sure to come back and continue the discipline with the prayer that God will use this extreme remedy to bring to repentance.

And never forget that it is because God's beloved Son was sold for thirty pieces of silver and nailed to the tree of the cross by His brethren that we may be corrected by discipline. As fallen in Adam we do not even have the right to be brought to repentance. Only as redeemed in Christ may we have means applied to us to convert us. And parents can weep for joy when they see the beginning of a change in their wayward children. But give the thanks then to God. For His Son Who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (II Corinthians 5:21). The cross gives us the right to be true men again. The blood of Christ covers our sins and gives us the right to be delivered from the evil of trying to cover up our sins and pretend to be what we are not.

## TAKING HEED TO DOCTRINE

# The Vile Sin of Homosexuality (2)

David Engelsma

Holy Scripture condemns the practice of homosexuality. Romans 1:27 calls it a "working that which is unseemly." Scripture condemns as well the tendency of a person to this evil. Homosexual nature itself is sin.

This is disputed in evangelical circles today. Some frown on homosexual deeds, but refuse to condemn, as sin, homosexual inclination and desire. They suppose that certain men and women are born with homosexual tendencies; this is part of their make-up, their very nature. From this, they conclude that these persons cannot be held responsible for their condition. Their sexual desire for one of their own sex may be a "disordered" condition, due to the general disorder caused by the fall into sin; but it is not sin.

The evangelical, German theologian, Helmut Thielicke, advances this view in his influential treatment of homosexuality (*The Ethics of Sex*:

Harper & Row, 1964, pp. 269-292). The chapter title gives it all away: "The Problem of Homosexuality." Thielicke speaks of an "endogenous," or "constitutional" homosexuality, which Scripture, supposedly, knows nothing of. This is a condition, according to Thielicke, which is "largely unsusceptible to medical or psychotherapeutic treatment, at least so far as achieving the desired goal of a fundamental conversion to normality is concerned." Is it, for the most part, "incurable." This condition may not be condemned as sinful:

The predisposition itself, the homosexual potentiality as such, dare not be any more strongly depreciated than the status of existence which we all share as men in the disordered creation that exists since the Fall (*post lapsum*). Consequently, there is not the slightest excuse for maligning the constitutional homosexual morally or theologically....

In fact, although the homosexual should first be ex-



horted to seek treatment of his questionable condition, when it becomes clear that this condition is incurable, the homosexual condition must be accepted. This means "to accept the burden of this predisposition to homosexuality only as a divine dispensation and see it as a task to be wrestled with, indeed—paradoxical as it may sound—to think of it as a talent that is to be invested [Luke 19:13ff.]"

Thielicke's lead is enthusiastically followed up by Letha Scanzoni and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, widely hailed as "two outstanding evangelical authors." In a book, *Is The Homosexual My Neighbor? Another Christian View* (Harper & Row, 1978), they assert that, in Romans 1, "no reference is made to persons whose own 'nature,' or primary orientation, is homosexual, as that term is understood by behavioral scientists" (p. 65). "The Bible," we are told, "is silent about the homosexual condition," so that "those who want to understand it must rely on the findings of modern behavioral science research and on the testimony of those persons who are themselves homosexual" (p. 71). On these bases, Scanzoni and Mollenkott instruct evangelical Christendom that there are persons who are born with a homosexual nature; that this condition should not be regarded as abnormal, but as analogous to being born left-handed; that the homosexual nature is not an illness, for "in the overall, homosexual persons are as psychologically healthy and as well integrated into society as heterosexual persons are" (p. 85); that the real problem very likely is not the homosexual, but the heterosexual who refuses "to grant full human acceptance to homosexual persons" (p. 86); and that, if sin is involved at all, it is not the homosexual who is guilty, but the Christian who condemns homosexuality—he bears false witness against his neighbor! (p. 87) Thus do these two outstanding evangelicals manage to put themselves fully under the Divine woe of Isaiah 5:20, not only calling evil good, but also calling good evil.

The refusal to condemn homosexual nature itself as sin, with homosexual practice, is grievous error. It is this, both practically and theologically. Practically, it opens up the way to an inevitable approval of homosexual acts and, thus, the sanctioning, in the Church, of practicing homosexuals and the assuring of such persons, by the Church that they too are pursuing the holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. If the desire is unrebukeable, how can the carrying out of the desire be condemned? One can still condemn certain forms of homosexual behavior; but he can no longer condemn homosexual practice as such. If the inclination is justified, or at least not blamed, on the ground that the man, or woman, was born with such a physical or psychological bent, the exercise of this inclination demands justification on the

same ground, especially as regards the powerful and significant reality of sex.

Also, this view weakens the hand of the child of God who must struggle against the lust of homosexuality. Tell him that the desire and nature are sinful; and you call him to crucify the desire and to mortify the old man, in the great, ongoing, spiritual warfare of conversion. But convince him (if this were possible) that the tendency and condition are blameless, indeed as normal and healthy as left-handedness; and you have accomplished his spiritual ruin.

That the acceptance of homosexual nature implies approval of homosexual practice comes out clearly both in Thielicke and in Scanzoni and Mollenkott.

Having called for acceptance of homosexual nature, Thielicke immediately asks the inevitable question: "Does this acceptance mean, then, that a person thus constituted may act in accord with his constitution, that this fateful *habitus* may be actualized?" His answer to this "ticklish question" is that this is permissible, if the homosexual is "willing to structure the man-man relationship in an *ethically responsible* way." For a Christian theologian to demand celibacy is both harsh and unBiblical. A sympathetic pastor will advise "the optimal ethical potential of sexual self-realization," i.e., homosexual acts with other homosexuals in private.

Where Thielicke treads ever so cautiously, Scanzoni and Mollenkott rush in. They rail against professing Christians who condemn homosexual relationships and practice out of hand. With egregious begging of the question, they point to "sincere homosexual Christian(s)" (p. 62). (Wonderful to relate, among the examples of Christian homosexuals given by Scanzoni and Mollenkott are Michelangelo, Erasmus of Rotterdam, and W. H. Auden!) They call upon the Church to accept practicing homosexuals and homosexual "friendship," i.e., a "committed love relationship analogous to heterosexual marriage" (pp. 111, 122ff.). The practicing homosexual is our neighbor; and every Christian must love him with a love that accepts his nature and approves his behavior. If these evangelical authors have their way, evangelical churches will be conducting evangelical wedding ceremonies for the evangelical marriages of homosexuals.

Theologically, the position that exonerates the homosexual condition, while condemning homosexual deeds, is the denial of the doctrine of original sin. For Protestants to adopt this position is for them to concede the truth of Roman Catholic dogma, vigorously controverted since the Reformation, that concupiscence (the evil desires of fallen human



nature) is not itself sin (cf. "the Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent," Fifth Session, 5). At stake are vital issues, e.g., the total depravity of human nature and salvation by grace alone, apart from all human effort.

For Reformed churches, or members, to hold this view is for them to contradict their own Confessions. Sin is not only deeds; it is also the corrupt nature from which the deeds arise. Sin is not located in the act of the will alone; sin is located, basically, in the depraved nature in which we are conceived and born (Heidelberg Catechism, Q.'s 5-7). Our great wickedness is not what we *do*, but what we *are* (Heid. Cat., Q. 8). God is not only terribly displeased with our "actual sins," but also with our "original" (literally, "inborn") sins; and He will punish these inborn sins, i.e., our nature, our condition, our desires, as well as our actual sins (Heid. Cat., Q. 10). The Spirit-directed conscience does not accuse a man only of acts of disobedience against God's commandments; but it accuses him also of being "still inclined to all evil" (Heid. Cat., Q. 60). Included in the debts which Christians ask God to forgive daily is "that depravity, which always cleaves to us" (Heid. Cat., Q. 126). He who runs may read the teaching of the Canons of Dordt in heads III, IV and the teaching of the Belgic Confession in Article XV.

To be sure, we are, all of us without exception, conceived and born sinful. Our nature, body and soul, is "disordered," i.e., unrighteous, and depraved. It is an unholy caldron boiling with evil desires of all kinds. This monstrous unnaturalness is now natural for the children of Adam. But this nature is itself our sin; every man is responsible before God for being thus disordered and depraved. The evil desires that boil forth from our nature are themselves our sins, altogether apart from our assenting to them and carrying them out; every man is guilty for his lusts. Romans 6:8 calls the corruption of the old, sinful nature, "the body of sin." In Romans 7:5, evil desires are called "the motions of sins." According to Romans 7:13ff., sin is not only a choice of the will, or a deed, but a

mighty (although not reigning) power dwelling and working in the nature and members of the regenerated child of God.

In keeping with Scripture's condemnation of the totality of sin—sin in root and branch, and not in branch only—the apostle of Christ condemns homosexual nature, as well as homosexual deed, in Romans 1. Homosexual desires are "vile affections" (v. 26) and burning lust (v. 27). Homosexual deeds proceed from a man's mind; and that mind is "reprobate" (v. 28), i.e., a mind which is not approved by God, but condemned as evil. The homosexual mind—the disposition, the tendency—is reprobate.

For this sin, both as regards passion and practice, the impenitent, practicing homosexual is reponsible. His is not a "minimal responsibility" but the maximum responsibility. He is not a helpless victim of his genes, or a passive pawn of disordered nature, any more than the "constitutional" liar, the "habitual" thief, or the drunkard. Women *change* the natural use, deliberately and actively (v. 26). Men *leave* the natural use, willingly, and *work*, energetically, that which is unseemly (v. 27).

Therefore, they are punished by God with death. The State may legitimize homosexual behavior (as "the Wolfenden Report" of 1957 recommended for Great Britain: "That homosexual behavior between consenting adults in private be no longer a criminal offense"). The churches may sanction homosexuality, as many are doing. But the judgment of God is that they which practice such things are worthy of death (v. 32).

To this judgment of God, the child of God who has been converted from his homosexuality assents. His comfort is not the denial of his sin, but the confidence of his faith in the promise of the gospel, that Jesus Christ made Himself fully responsible for his homosexual acts of the past and for the corrupt nature, with its foul desires, that still remains in him, enduring God's just judgment of death in his stead on the cross.

(to be concluded)

## GUEST ARTICLE

# Confession of Faith — What Is it?

Rev. H. Veldman

Confession of faith—what is it?

Our young people are expected to confess their faith when they reach the age of discretion. This is an obligation that rests upon them. This confession

is the purpose of all their catechetical instruction. This catechetical instruction usually begins with the seed of the covenant at the age of six, although in some of our churches it begins at the age of five.



The catechism books which have been adopted by our churches designate the age of six as the age when this instruction begins. The child attends kindergarten at the age of five. We believe that a child has his "hands full" when attending kindergarten. To this we may add that this five-year old also attends Sunday School. We believe that it is better for a child to begin his catechetical instruction at the age of six. Our catechetical books, entitled "For Beginners," are for children of six through eight years of age.

This catechetical instruction has for its purpose the child's confession of faith. Our Christian schools prepare the seed of the covenant for their place in the midst of the world. Sometimes we hear of three agencies of instruction: the home, the school, and the church. There are really only two agencies of instruction: the home and the church. The school is really an extension of the home. If our parents were able to instruct their children we would have no schools. Our parents, however, lack the time and the ability to furnish them with this instruction. The result is that our parents organize into school societies, hire teachers, and delegate to these teachers their authority to teach their children in their name. Now these schools prepare our children for their place in the midst of the world, that they may conduct themselves as the people of God's covenant in the midst of that world. This is the purpose and function of the Christian school. In the church, however, that same child is prepared to assume his (or her) place in the sphere of the church, and this means that that child is prepared to partake of the means of grace (including the sacraments) and reveal himself (or herself) as a member of the body of Christ. This is the purpose of all catechetical instruction.

Confession of faith—what is it? What is its importance? What must be stressed and emphasized when our young people appear to make confession of faith before our church councils and consistories and publicly in the presence of the congregation? Incidentally, as I write this I had no knowledge of the report of the committee that advised our synod in regards to our form for public confession of faith. I have that report now and will presently comment on it. We do well, in this connection, to read the questions that are asked at this public confession of faith—see page 59 in the back of our Psalters. It can also be profitable to read the questions asked at the sacrament of baptism, whether of infants or adults. Is the purpose of their confession of faith that our children confess their personal faith in the Lord Jesus? Does this confession center in their confession of personal salvation? Does the emphasis fall upon this, that they know that they are children of God, that they love God and believe in

Jesus as their personal Saviour? Of course, they must know that they are children of God. The undersigned always asked them this question. We certainly would not admit to the table of the Lord young people who do not love the Lord. Doing so, we would profane the table of the Lord. And this is surely a heinous sin, condemned all through Scripture, and also in Lord's Day 31 of our Heidelberg Catechism.

Are there those in our churches who are of the opinion that this knowledge of their personal salvation is really the heart and thrust of our children's confession of faith? I sometimes wonder. Is it possible that our council and consistory members are satisfied when the seed of the covenant appear and confess their personal faith in the Lord Jesus? Do our young people understand what it means to make confession of faith in a Protestant Reformed Church? Do they think that they can make confession of faith in any other church? Has it not happened, when our young confessing believers join another church, that they say that they can also confess their faith in the Lord Jesus in that other church? Do they understand what it means to make a Protestant Reformed confession of faith? Or, is it possible that this is after all not the important thing? Is this the matter of the greatest importance: confession of personal faith in Jesus?

I referred in this article to the questions that are asked at Public Confession of Faith. I also referred to the questions asked at the sacrament of baptism, whether of infants or adults. Have we ever read these questions carefully? These forms were drawn up, I am sure, very carefully and deliberately by our fathers many, many years ago. What is striking about these questions? Is it not striking that in our Public Confession of Faith there is nothing asked about the young person's personal knowledge of salvation, although, as we shall observe later, the subjective and spiritual element is not lacking in these questions? They are not asked whether they believe in God or in Christ. Why is this? Is this an error on the part of our fathers? I think not. Should we change our form for the public confession of faith, incorporate into these questions a question concerning one's personal salvation, as the committee proposed with their revised form to be submitted to this year's synod? I fear that this would be a step in the wrong direction, that it would reveal a failure on our part to understand our fathers and the form we have had these many, many years. Do not misunderstand me. I do not claim that our fathers were infallible. But, if we wish to change things, we surely had better know what we are doing. I do not favor change simply for the sake of change. And, let us by all means attempt to understand our fathers and the form we have. I have



already called attention to the striking character of our present form for the public confession of faith. I again ask: why is this?

What, for example, shall we say in connection with our forms for the administration of baptism? Notice, please, that the same emphasis is laid upon the doctrinal instruction of the child. This must not escape our attention. But this is not all. Does not the first question asked of the parents include the statement that these children are sanctified in Christ? Do not misunderstand this expression. This does not mean that they are sanctified in Christ merely in a formal sense, that in some vague manner they are separated from the world and formally consecrated to Christ. This means that they are sanctified in Christ actually and spiritually. They are holy, spiritually. To be sure, this does not refer to every baptized child. All is not Israel that is called Israel. There is spiritual Israel and there is also a carnal Israel, an elect Israel and a reprobate Israel. The believers bring forth an elect seed but also a reprobate seed. These "sanctified in Christ" are the elect seed. All is not Israel but it is called Israel. The entire organism bears the name of the elect kernel. What does this imply and indicate? This, that our fathers were very keenly conscious and aware of the scriptural truth that God realizes His covenant in the line of successive generations and that the Lord usually regenerates His people, the children of believers, in their infancy. It is this truth that we must ever bear in mind.

What bearing, now, does this have on our public confession of faith and the form we have had these many, many years? Why is it that there is nothing in these questions that refers to one's personal knowledge of salvation, at least in the sense that they who are making confession of faith are not asked whether they love God and believe in Christ? Why? The answer is obvious. God usually regenerates His people in their infancy. Confession of faith does not mean that they then become conscious of the fact that they are children of God, although there may be such exceptional cases (God can and does regenerate a sinner at any moment of his life, also when he has become old). Usually, however, they are regenerated in their infancy. A child of 5 to 10 years of age, to use this age as an example, may very well know himself to be a child of God. But this does not necessarily mean that that child can make public confession of faith, can assume, responsibly, his or her place in the ranks of the people of God, can consciously fulfill his covenant obligations.

Confession of faith means that a church council or consistory has given one the right and privilege to make public confession of faith in the midst of the congregation. It means that we are ready and

able to assume, consciously, our covenant obligations, to stand and fight in the ranks of the people of God, as soldiers of the cross. This explains why these questions are asked at our public confession of faith. This explains why those making confession are asked whether they believe the doctrine contained in the Old and New Testaments and in the Articles of the Christian faith and *taught here in this Christian Church* (I underscore) to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation. This explains why they are asked whether they have resolved by the grace of God to adhere to this doctrine and to reject all heresies repugnant thereto. And, indeed, they are also asked whether they are resolved to lead a new, godly life. Of course, their confession must be spiritual. However, our young people must understand what it means to confess their faith in a Protestant Reformed Church, that they could never confess their faith in any other church. This is the reason why the undersigned always was in favor of a doctrinal review class, using a book which the late Rev. H. Hoeksema had written for this very purpose, in which all the emphasis was laid upon the distinctive character of this confession. This review class did not mean that young people were pressured into making confession of faith. There is absolutely no truth in this. Yes, it is easy for our councils or consistories to ask young people: do you believe in Jesus? But it is imperative that they know in what church they confess their faith. In this we must ever continue to be vigilant. Let us never relax. Let us never lower the bars. May we ever remain doctrinal, distinctively doctrinal, and this means: let us ever remain Protestant Reformed. This requires effort, much effort and study. But we cannot afford to be satisfied with less. May the Lord always give us grace to hold fast the Word of truth, to know what we believe, never relaxing in this instruction of our children.

Do we need a revised form for Public Confession of Faith? Must we revise our form to call attention to the obligation to partake of the Lord's Supper? Is there anyone, among those who make confession of faith and throughout the entire congregation, who does not know fully that this confession of faith gives the right and privilege and also the solemn obligation to partake of the sacraments, including the Lord's Supper, to those who confess their faith in the midst of the congregation? Is a revised form necessary, to replace the one that has been used these many, many years? Hardly! Moreover, must we revise our form so that we may add the subjective, personal, spiritual element, lest our public confessions become mere attestations to the truth in the intellectual sense of the word? The committee which proposed this revised form for adoption at this year's synod writes, and I quote



(page 91 of the Agenda): "2/We fear that the absence of the subjective element of public confession of faith might lead to the situation in which confessors of faith in the church will not realize their public confession requires of them to be confident of their personal salvation. This in turn might lead to the situation in which confessors of faith do not even come to the Lord's Table, as is true in at least one denomination at the present time." The undersigned does not share this fear. When did this phenomenon ever reveal itself in the history of our churches? Does not this personal, subjective, and spiritual element come to expres-

sion in our present form? Do we not read in the second question: "to reject all heresies repugnant thereto and to *lead a new, godly life?*" (I underscore) Do we not inculcate this subjective and personal element in all our catechetical instruction? Are not the sacraments taught our children in our Heidelberg Catechism for Juniors and in our Essentials? I do not share this fear. This is my concern: let us hold fast what we have that no man may take our crown. I am afraid of: *Nieuwigheid en Dwaling*. Do we need a revised form? Let us please understand our present form and maintain it to the utmost of our power.

## BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

# Romans — Justification by Faith (2)

Rev. J. Kortering

As we study the epistle to the Romans, it is helpful to consider the circumstances under which Paul wrote it.

### DATE AND PLACE OF COMPOSITION

Paul had labored extensively in the church of Corinth during his second missionary journey. According to Acts 18:1, he was there for a year and six months. On his third missionary journey, after laboring in Ephesus, he returned to Corinth (Acts 20:23) and labored in that area for another three months. During this time he wrote his letter to Rome.

You ask, how do we know this? By examining bits of information given in this letter itself, we come to this conclusion. In Romans 15:23, Paul mentions that he is about to set out for his return to Jerusalem. He had in hand the offerings for the poor in Jerusalem which had been collected from the churches of Macedonia and Achaia (Romans 15:26). It was his intention to travel to Jerusalem with this money and then depart for Rome (Romans 15:24, 28). He probably sent the letter to Rome by the hand of Phoebe, a deaconess from the nearby city of Cenchrea (Romans 16:1). Gaius is mentioned in this letter as one who sent his greetings (Romans 16:23), and according to I Corinthians 1:14 he was in Corinth. Likewise, Erastus sent his greetings (Romans 16:23) and we know he was treasurer in Corinth. From this we conclude that Paul must have been in Corinth at the time of the writing.

Since both I and II Corinthians mention the col-

lection of the alms for the Jerusalem poor as being gathered, and in this letter to the Romans as being completed, the date for the writing of this epistle must have been soon after the writing of I and II Corinthians. This would make it about A.D. 56 or early A.D. 57.

### PURPOSE AND CENTRAL MESSAGE

Paul finished his labors in the churches of Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Achaia. The churches were organized and established in the truth. The word had gone forth from strategic centers, Antioch, Ephesus, and Corinth, and spread throughout the region. Certain problems in the local churches had been dealt with and now the apostle set his goals westward to Rome and even Spain. Hence a letter to Rome served a double purpose. It was preparatory for his coming, by it he sought to build up the church thereby setting forth the truth in a concise and precise manner, so that upon his arrival they would already have begun to contemplate the truth. At the same time, Paul may have had forewarning of impending difficulty in Jerusalem. Should he be injured or even killed, a summary of the truth would already have been sent to Rome so that the gospel could go forward, even if need be in his absence.

With this in mind, we can appreciate the epistle of Romans. The Holy Spirit moved Paul to write just such a summary of the gospel for the church of all ages. Rome was destined to become a strategic center for the spread of the gospel. This epistle served to set forth the content of that gospel. Its



grand theme of justification by faith and not by the works of the law is given in detail. This truth extols the sovereignty of God. The Holy Spirit guided Martin Luther to ponder its depths which became the fountain head of the Reformation. Of the epistle, Luther wrote, "It is the true masterpiece of the New Testament, and the very purest Gospel, which is well worthy and deserving that a Christian man should not only learn it by heart, word for word, but also that he should daily deal with it as the daily bread of men's souls. For it can never be too much or too well read or studied; and the more it is handled the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes." Surely, he spoke from experience, well may we read it and study it with prayerful diligence.

#### BRIEF OUTLINE

1. The introduction (1:1-15). As is generally true in the writing of epistles, Paul identified himself as author, identified the recipient of the letter, and extended salutation and blessing (1:1-7). He assured the Roman Christians that the gospel was for them as well as the Jews, he expressed eagerness to bring the gospel to them (1:8-15).

2. Paul by the Holy Spirit set forth the great doctrine of justification by faith in detail (1:16-11:36).

He begins by showing that both Jew and Gentile cannot obtain righteousness before God by the keeping of the law or by works they perform. All are under the curse of sin (1:16-3:20). The Gentiles have the general knowledge of God through creation, but even that does not change them. Rather, it leaves them without an excuse to keep on sinning as they do. As a result, God's wrath comes upon them and He gives them over to a reprobate mind to work all kinds of abominations (1:16-32). The same thing applies to the Jews. All are under the curse of sin, so that a Jew cannot certainly judge another Gentile as being worse than he is. The Jews may be outwardly circumcised, have the knowledge of the law, even keep the letter of the law, and still perish. The law cannot save, it can only condemn: "By the deed of the law no flesh is justified." The only privilege the Jew had over against the Gentile was that he had the Gospel preached to him (2:1-3:20).

Righteousness before God is ours only through Jesus Christ (3:21-5:21). The apostle now turns from the misery of sin to salvation in Jesus Christ. He sets forth righteousness in Christ (redemption) which becomes ours by means of faith. That faith is the only way of salvation for both Jew and Gentile. It likewise excludes all boasting, it extols God (3:21-31). Paul now cites two examples from the Old Testament that show that the same thing was true then: justification for the Old Testament saint was

through faith in Jesus Christ. The first example given is Abraham. He believed God and He counted it to him for righteousness. This means that Abraham believed in the promise of God that directed him to Christ. Abraham demonstrated that by offering his only son, Isaac. God's promise was yea and amen in Christ Jesus (4:1-5, 9-25). The second example is David and his rejoicing in the forgiveness of sin (4:6-8). Those who have such like faith receive the blessings of justification, peace with God, the ability to glory in tribulation, to have patience, hope, and experience (5:1-6). All of this flows from Jesus Christ. He gave His life as a ransom for the ungodly, the sinner. The benefit is extended to all His people. Even as death resulted from Adam's transgression, so life flows forth from Christ's exaltation. Now in Christ, grace reigns through righteousness (5:7-21).

This righteousness of God in Christ is a power that influences our life in such a way that we delight in the law of God (6:1-8:39).

The apostle carefully spells out for us that faith does not give us the liberty to sin. Rather, our old man is buried with Christ so that we are dead to sin in order that we may now live unto God (6:1-23). He uses marriage as an example. We were married to the law, but in Christ we died to the law that now we may be married to Christ (7:1-4). This does not eliminate the influence of sin, which still is in our members. Rather than give heed to sin, we now by faith delight in the law according to the inward man. The tension this produces in the child of God is that he is willing to do good, but evil is still present. Even that drives him to Jesus Christ for his refuge (7:5-25). In Jesus Christ we rejoice, for we are delivered from the bondage of the law unto the liberty of the children of God. Now there is no condemnation; there is freedom in Jesus Christ. That freedom is not to sin with impunity. No, it is freedom to believe that all things work together for good to them that love God. Even the natural creation has hope, though now it still groans. We have hope, though now we still groan. The Spirit takes our groanings and through Christ makes intercession for us (8:1-30). Now the apostle leads us to sing a beautiful doxology of praise that nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ. From predestination to glory, God's love is faithful (8:31-39).

God's righteousness is displayed in the salvation of Israel and of the Gentiles (9:1-11:36). Paul asserts his personal desire for the salvation of his brethren, the Jews. He recognizes that they are not all saved (9:1-5). As he proceeds to deal with the reason for this, he first sets forth the truth that it is not the fault of the gospel, "as if the word of God hath taken none effect" (9:6). Rather, it is because not all



who are outwardly Israelites are the true Israel of God. The children of the promise are counted for the seed. These are the elect of God, for, "Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated." God's sovereignty is the deepest cause of the salvation of true Israel (9:7-13). God showed His sovereign mercy to Moses (9:14-16) and His sovereign judgment and wrath upon Pharaoh (9:17, 18). He anticipated an objection that if God sovereignly determines salvation, how can man be responsible for his fault? He answers that man must not call God to account. The potter hath power over the clay to make vessels as ornaments or practical dishes. How much more does Almighty God have power to make vessels of wrath or mercy (9:19-24)? He quotes from both Hosea (Hos. 1:10) and Isaiah (Is. 10:22) to show that the elect include both Jews and Gentiles. This explains why Jews perish and Gentiles are saved (9:25-33). The apostle now shows that Israel in a great measure rejected the gospel. He, as an apostle, desired their salvation (10:1-3). Though they claim to hold the law, they really rejected it, for Christ was the end of the law (10:4). He referred to Moses and the prophets to show that they spoke

of Christ (10:5-13). There is only one Lord, and all who call upon Him are saved. They call because they believe; they believe because they heard Christ; they heard Christ through the preaching of the gospel; they heard the preaching because one was sent out by the church in the name of Christ. Many heard, but did not obey (10:14-21). The remnant of election among the Jews is saved (11:1-6). The others not saved were blinded, as Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 29:10. David said the same thing in Psalm 69:22. The purpose of this is that by the hardening of the Jews the Gentiles are brought in. This did not mean that God no longer cared about the Jews. Rather, by including the Gentiles, the Jews according to election were provoked to holy jealousy and turned to Jesus Christ. In this way all Israel is saved (11:7-15). He uses the example of the olive tree. There were natural branches, the Jews, and there were wild branches engrafted into the tree, Gentiles. Together they make up the one tree, God's elect people throughout history joined by faith in Jesus Christ (11:16-32). Again he concludes with a doxology of praise to God Whose judgments are unsearchable (11:33-36).

## Annual Secretary's Report of the R.F.P.A.

September 17, 1981

Dear Brethren:

The Board of the R.F.P.A. takes this occasion to inform you of its activities of the past year.

Besides the routine work of its three standing committees which are the Information & Education, the Finance, & the Book Committees....another committee of four is busy. Henry Kamps, Tom Bodbyl, Jim Koole, and Ken Hanko, called "committee for Publication of Standard Bearer Index," are working at compiling and arranging all subjects and titles from all the *Standard Bearer* Volumes to form an Index in systematic, alphabetical order.

The Board has granted a loan of one thousand dollars to this committee to cover expenses for this needful and worthwhile project. As the Indexes are sold, this money will be repaid. Completion date is early 1982 or sooner.

In October of 1980, Wobbema Printing notified the Board that beginning in January 1981 a 15% cost increase would be in effect. Because of their

quality work and because of the good relationship we have had with this company over the years, we the Board felt it best to accept the added cost. We did offset the total publishing cost somewhat consolidating the work formerly done by Photo Composition and by National Correct Color by going to Commercial Printing.

Concerning the matter of finances our balance carried forward September 1, 1981 shows an increase of some \$800.00. This was mainly due to the fact that our subscription price was increased \$1.00 per year per subscriber. Our church collections in comparison with a year ago slightly decreased, although individual gifts remained about the same.

The Board is encouraged by the present financial receipts, although, we would hasten to add, we do need and appeal for your continued financial support. Non-profit we may be, but as a business we still need funds to operate.

We thank our faithful covenant God Who inclines the hearts of His people to give, that the



R.F.P.A. may all these many years have published the *Standard Bearer*....truly Scriptural, truly Reformed.

Our Editor-in-Chief and co-editors are truly zealous and dedicated to those principles and that Standard.

Regarding the printing and mailing of the *Standard Bearer*, herewith are some facts and figures furnished by our Business Manager:

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Total copies per issue printed                              | 2,000 |
| Total copies per issue mailed locally                       | 795   |
| Total copies mailed outside western Michigan                | 789   |
| Total copies mailed to foreign countries (including Canada) | 177   |
| Total copies reserved for bound volumes                     | 150   |
| Total copies mailed and used for bound volumes              | 1,911 |

1. At least one subscriber in each of the countries in the United Kingdom (England, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland)

2. More subscribers in Grand Rapids than any other city, Jenison is 2nd, Hudsonville is 3rd, followed by South Holland and Lansing, Illinois.

3. States receiving the most *Standard Bearers* are: 1-Michigan 2-Illinois 3-California 4-New Jersey 5-New York. We have 9 subscribers in Singapore.

No annual R.F.P.A. report would be complete without a word of recognition and thanks to our Business Manager, Mr. Henry Vander Wal. In his own unique way and manner he continues to get the job done, with the result that the *Standard Bearer* arrives to you the reader...be it U.S.A. or foreign lands.

As we stand on the threshold of another publication year (Vol. 58) let us pause to declare "Ebenezer"—Hitherto has the Lord helped us.

Board of the Reformed Free  
Publishing Association.  
Vice Sec.-Treas.  
P. Koole

## SIGNS OF THE TIMES

# A Tale of Three Houses and a Church

Rev. R. Flikkema

On a street in a certain city there are found three houses and a church. In each of the three houses dwell a husband and a wife. In the church dwells... well, we know who dwells in the church. God's people dwell there. The article which follows has to do with what goes on between these husbands and wives in these their houses. It will focus on the relationship that exists between them—quite a different relationship as we shall see.

The relationship of the husband and wife in the first house is extremely tragic. The husband is a very proud man. He is a man who thinks a great deal of himself, and, in so doing, goes about his everyday activities, and yes, even his activities in his home, with a very pompous air about him. He views the people in the world with whom he has to do as being inferior to him. He views them as owing him everything, while he who is far superior owes them nothing. And this view, as I have already indicated, he also has with respect to his wife. In his dealing with his wife he is also very proud and very boastful. He is always talking about himself and

about the tremendous things that he has done. For after all, remember, he is such a superior man! And his wife? In his opinion she is, right along with the people in the world, not worth much. All that she is worthy of doing is waiting on him hand and foot—getting him this and getting him that. In his opinion she is little more than a servant, a slave, who ought to think it simply the greatest honor in the world that he chose her to be his slave. And sometimes when she does not think it such an honor to be his slave, he even beats her because, after all, that is what you do with slaves!

Such is the relationship of the husband and the wife in the first house. Now, the relationship of the husband and the wife in the second house is slightly different. In fact it is quite a bit different. In this house the wife thinks a good deal of herself. She considers herself to be quite an intelligent person, quite a knowledgeable person, a person with quite a number of talents, which talents she considers it her calling to utilize in the world round about her. She seeks a profession in the world, and does very



good at it too. But then when she comes home to her husband, she, who is so enamored with her intelligence and her knowledge and her talents and her profession, looks down on her husband. She considers herself to be so much better than her husband. And when her husband dares to ask her (not dare to tell her now, but dare to ask her) if she is willing to do something for him, or if he dares to instruct her in some matter that he deems necessary, the wife immediately responds by saying to him, "Who do you think you are? I am just as important as you are. I have just as many rights as you do. And because of my superior intelligence and knowledge I am even more important than you are. You want me to do something for you? Do it yourself! You want me to listen to what you have to say? I don't need to hear what you have to say! Get with it, husband. We live in the twentieth century, the century of the E.R.A., etc., etc.,!"

Such is the relationship of the husband and the wife in the second house. Now, about the relationship of the husband and the wife in the third house. That too is quite a bit different. In fact it is all together different from either of the relationships that we have described as they existed in the first two houses. For this husband and wife are a God-fearing husband and wife. They are a husband and wife who together, but led by the husband, have searched the Scriptures and have come to an understanding of what the Scriptures have to say concerning their relationship, and have bowed in humble submission to what they say for God's sake. You do not find in this house a husband who is filled with pride, a husband who considers himself to be far superior to his wife, a husband who looks at his wife and treats his wife as if she were nothing more than a slave. Nor do you find in this house a wife who is enamored with whatever intelligence, knowledge, and talents she may possess, and who therefore looks down on her husband as being less important than she, and who tramples his authority underfoot, refusing to stand in subjection to him. But rather, you find in this house a husband and a wife who understand that God, according to His Word, has made the husband the head of his wife, with all that that implies.

And that implies much! That implies the fact that he is called by God to rule over and govern his wife. He is to rule over her! Not now as a tyrant over a slave. Not in the least! A tyrant he is not and a slave she is not! But head he is—a head who must rule over his wife, motivated in whatever he does with respect to his wife by love. A tyrant is a tyrant by virtue of the fact that he deals with the people under his dominion not out of love but out of hatred. But a God-fearing husband who understands that he is the head of his wife will not deal with his

wife in hatred but out of love, and he will rule over his wife in that way. Still more! That he is the head of his wife means that he must teach his wife and instruct his wife. Even as the head of a body is the source of all knowledge, so also has God made this husband, by virtue of the fact that God made him head, the source of all knowledge for his wife. And particularly he is the source of all knowledge as that knowledge pertains to the Word of God. By virtue of the fact that God has made this husband the head of his wife, this husband understands it to be his calling to teach his wife the Word of God, to instruct her in the Word of God, to bring her, day in and day out, to the Scriptures in order to impress upon her the wondrous truths that are found therein. That this husband understands to be his calling—a calling which God has given him. And, too, he understands it to be a horrible shame if he does not do that! If he does not rule over his wife, if he does not teach his wife, and if he does not because he does not feel like it or because he does not possess the knowledge necessary to teach his wife (and that latter because he himself has failed in his calling to search the Scriptures), he understands that to be a horrible shame!

And the God-fearing wife in this house, she looks to her husband as her God-given head. She does not view him in terms of superior or inferior, as better or worse, but she views him to be her head. And she respects him in love as such. Which means that she stands in subjection to his ruling love. That first of all. She understands that even as the body must stand in subjection to the head, so also must she stand in subjection to her husband. Not to do so is not only contrary to nature, but also and above all contrary to the Word of God. But in the second place, not only does she stand in subjection to him, but she also stands ready and willing always to be instructed in the Word of God by him. She is always ready and willing to have her husband teach her what God says. And she is that because she needs to have that instruction! A wife needs to be instructed in the Word of God. Why? The answer to that question is simply that God made her that way. God, creating her as the weaker vessel, made her that way. That is not something to be ashamed about, but rather to rejoice about. We must not be ashamed at the way in which God makes things, but rather rejoice in the way in which our good God makes things. And, even more, we must rejoice in the fact that God gives to wives husbands to supply their God-given need! The wife in this house so does that.

The relationship of the husband and the wife in this house therefore reflects in a most beautiful way the relationship that God's people in that church on this street experience with Christ. The



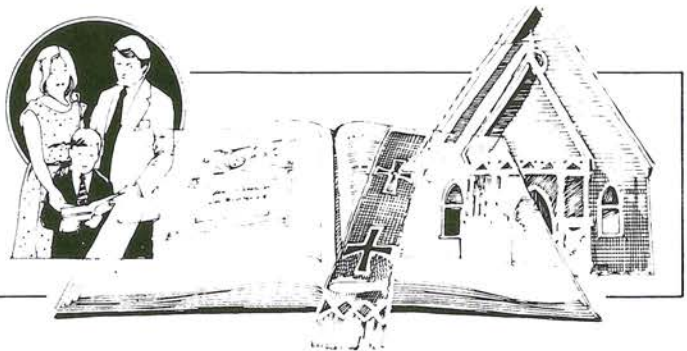
other two houses on this street do not reflect that relationship. But this house does. And what is that relationship? It is the relationship of Christ, the Head to His bride, the Church. It is Christ's ruling and governing of His bride the Church—not out of hatred as a tyrant, but out of love as Head. It is the relationship of Christ as head instructing His bride the Church with an instruction which she so sorely needs. The Church, which is the bride and wife of Christ, needs the instruction of Christ, her Head. She simply can not exist without it. Day after day she needs to hear Christ's voice as He speaks to her through the instruction of the preached Word. And day after day she rejoices that Christ, her Head, not only rules over her, but also in His love supplies her need.

That relationship between Christ and His Church is reflected in the relationship of the husband and wife in that third house. And the question is, is that relationship the relationship that is reflected in our homes? Do we as husbands understand our God-given place as head of wives? Do we understand it to be our calling to rule over our wives in love, even as Christ rules over His bride the Church? Do we teach our wives even as Christ teaches His Church? Or do we so deal with our wives as tyrants over slaves? Do we fail to teach our

wives the Word of God as we ought, and that because we do not know it ourselves? Do we as wives stand in love in subjection to our husbands? Do we understand it to be our calling to listen to them, and listen to them particularly when they teach us God's Word? Or do we disobey our husbands and not think too much of the instruction which we need and which they give?

It simply will not do for us as God-fearing husbands and wives to do anything other than what God says. The husbands and wives of this world fail to do what God says, which exactly is the explanation for the relationship between husbands and wives in the world today as we found them in the first two houses. May that not be true of us. However, we ought to be aware of the fact, and at the same time confess, that sometimes it is. The relationship that exists between husbands and wives in this world as we live in the last times has a way sometimes of affecting our relationship one to another. We live in the latter days. It will not be long and Christ, the head of His Church, will come to take His bride to glory. When He comes, what will be the relationship that He sees between God-fearing husbands and wives? What relationship will He see between you as a God-fearing husband and you as a God-fearing wife?

## *Know the standard and follow it. The Standard Bearer*



### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 29 our parents celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary.

Matthew 28:20b: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

Hank Nederhoed  
Ron and Margaret De Boer  
John Nederhoed  
Joyce Nederhoed

### NOTICE!!!

#### ADMINISTRATOR NEEDED

Covenant Christian High School will be in need of an Administrator beginning with the 1982/83 school term. Applicants should contact the Chairman of the Education Committee by December 1, 1981:

Mr. David Ondersma  
6761 Brookwood Drive, S.W.  
Grandville, Michigan 49418  
(616) 457-1417

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On November 7, 1981, our parents, MR. and MRS. DANIEL POORTINGA, will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary.

We, their children and grandchildren, thank our heavenly Father for giving us God-fearing parents who have brought us up in the fear of the Lord. It is our prayer that God will bless and keep them in His care in the years to come.

"For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting and His truth endureth to all generations." (Psalm 100:5)

David and Linda Poortinga  
Kimberly, Craig, Deborah and Chandra  
Raymond and Cindy Poortinga  
Jodi and Jared  
Kevin Poortinga  
Daniel and Jessica Wiersma  
Heidi



## News From Our Churches

As you know from the absence of a news column in the last issue of S.B., Classis West met on September 9 in our Hull, Iowa Church. On the day prior to classis, an officebearers' conference was held—as has been the practice of late—on the subject of the ruling elder. Papers were presented by John Kalsbeek, Jr., of Redlands, California and M. Straayer of Edmonton, Alberta.

From a trio of Reverends Houck, Kamps, and Van Overloop, Rev. Van Overloop of our Birmingham mission field has been extended the call from Redlands, Calif.

Our "retired" ministers are still very much in demand. First Church of Grand Rapids has arranged to send Rev. Schipper to labor for a couple of months in Bradenton, Florida when Rev. Harbach returns, and Rev. Heys is now preaching in Redlands.

Due to the fact that there are no pulpit vacancies in Classis East, our Seminary has requested of our Grand Rapids area churches occasional "Seminary Sundays." A "Seminary Sunday" is defined as a Sunday in which professors and seminarians are given an opportunity to preach and give a word of edification. From the looks of the bulletins I have received, the churches are complying with this request.

The Canons of Dordt is the subject of discussion for two new study classes being held in the Grand Rapids area this fall. Our Hudsonville and Southeast consistories are sponsoring the classes which meet in the Byron Center Library, and the Calvin College Fine Arts Center on alternate Wednesdays. Prof. H.C. Hoeksema, author of a recently published commentary on the Canons, *Voice of Our Fathers*, is teaching the classes.

The Federation Board of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies sponsored a weekend fall retreat at YMCA Camp Douglas, Muskegon, MI on September 11 and 12. Activities of the retreat included a speech, panel discussion, singing, and discussion groups as well as swimming, canoeing, volleyball, and football.

Pastor Bekkering of our Trinity Protestant Re-

formed Church of Houston, Texas made special mention on their August 9 bulletin that they were "19 souls richer than a month ago." It appears Rev. Bekkering was on vacation at the time, and the elder that was conducting the worship service was so overwhelmed that he was left "speechless for a few moments." Pastor Bekkering further reports that upon *his* return home from vacation he too was "overwhelmed." Then in a footnote Rev. Bekkering gives his definition of overwhelmed: "Overwhelmed means that after attempting to speak the invocation he had to return to the consistory room to compose himself. The congregation sang Psalter #10 as they waited. Elder Sugg had failed to warn him what the effect of that sea of faces might be. It turns out that the stolid Michigan Hollander is as helpless before the mercies of God as the Anglo-Celtic Texan."

The following worthwhile "thoughts on improving congregational singing" were printed in an August, Hudsonville, Michigan bulletin:

**Volume:** Ever notice how afraid we often are lest others hear us singing too lustily? Most sing at less than half capacity—and some appear to sing not at all. If each, for most songs, doubles the volume—what a joyous sound indeed would arise before God's throne.

**Punctuation:** Ever notice how we inevitably stop singing at the end of a phrase—even when there are no commas or periods? Singing, while observing punctuation, makes most songs more meaningful. (Necessary breaths can be taken in the *middle* of phrases—rather than at the end of an unpunctuated phrase.)

**Reverence:** Ever notice how we quickly put away our books and even begin to sit down—before the song is ended? Perhaps the songs are so familiar we can do without books. But would it not be more respectful and less distracting if all books were placed back in their racks *after* the song is finished?

We close this column with some subscription news from our business manager, Mr. VanderWal, that has what he called "international flavor." As I understand it a subscriber from Singapore gave a gift subscription of S.B. to a sister who resides in Scotland. That means we now have our first, but hopefully not last, subscriber in Scotland.

CK